



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## A Report to the 26th District

Summer 2001



### **Representative Pat Lantz**

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Dear Neighbor,

This year we faced an extremely tough legislative session brought on by a tight state budget, an energy shortage, a drought, and an earthquake. Despite all these obstacles, we made significant progress in the following areas:

- **Education-** We crafted the best education budget in decades, without raising taxes. The two-year budget reduces class sizes and provides additional support to improve students' reading skills and increase teacher training. We also made important investments in our state's community and technical colleges, including major new facilities to benefit our district.
- **Economic Development-** We enacted measures to reduce regulations on small businesses, increase access to capital and spur rural economic growth.
- **Public Health and Safety-** We approved laws protecting children by notifying parents when old baby products are recalled for being dangerous and when pesticides are sprayed near local schools. We passed a budget to offer fairer pay for long-term caregivers. And we toughened penalties for hit-and-run drivers and gave police better tools to stamp out meth labs.
- **Salmon Recovery-** We also passed several laws and allocated new funding to restore salmon and steelhead runs through the Hood Canal. These efforts will not only yield more salmon, but will attract new jobs and more tourism to the west Puget Sound.
- **Judicial Reform-** Responding to the problem of overcrowded courts, the Legislature passed a measure to allow judges from different jurisdictions to serve in different counties or municipalities when serious backlogs occur.

Unfortunately, we did not make significant progress on the critical issue of transportation. We will continue to advocate for a second Tacoma Narrows Bridge that is accountable to the public it serves and work to pass a transportation plan that protects our ferry system. We will bring you a report on these efforts as soon as possible.

Inside is a further explanation of our accomplishments this session. Please contact us with your concerns or comments about issues affecting your community. And thank you for giving us the opportunity to represent the citizens of the 26th District.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Lantz Brock Jackley*

## ◆ K-12 Education:

Our biennial budget provides an increase of almost \$900 million for public schools- roughly a 10 percent increase in the school budget for smaller classes, better teacher training and salaries plus other school improvements. With the help of the voters, we were able to pass the best budget for public education this state has seen in decades, increasing per student spending from \$4982 to \$5437.

We also passed an important measure to allow retired teachers to return to work without losing their pensions. Prior to passage of this law, certain restrictions prevented teachers who had reached retirement age from receiving their pension funds if they chose to continue working. This prevented many fine teach-

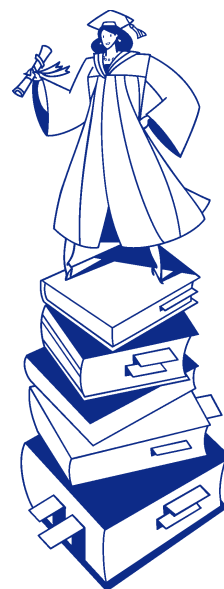


ers from continuing in their professions and prodded some teachers to look for opportunities out of state. Under the new law, teachers would be allowed up to 1500 hours of employment per school year without a reduction in pension benefits. Rep. Jackley, who taught in the public school system for 28 years, sponsored the House version of the bill. This new law will help us retain outstanding, experienced teachers in our public schools.

## ◆ Higher Education:

At the college level, we have worked to increase access to higher education for students in the west and south Puget Sound. Rep. Lantz, a member of the House Education Committee, played a major role in securing some of the new facilities and investments include:

- **A new University of Washington-Tacoma Technology Institute.** This is a major new endeavor to train local students for high-demand, high-tech jobs. Despite the recent troubles of the dot-com economy, many high-tech jobs are here to stay-representing a fundamental shift in our economy. Currently, many high-tech positions are open because the state does not have an adequate number of skilled workers to fill them. This new facility will address this issue, serving as an entry point for computer science students from the south and west Puget Sound to the growing high-tech economy.
- **An expansion at Tacoma Community College.** A new information technology/vocational center will be constructed on the campus along with a new science building and upgrades to some of the campus' older facilities.
- **A new computer science language lab in Bremerton.** This new facility, affiliated with the UW-Tacoma's Technology Institute, will serve as a bridge for west Puget Sound students to the region's high-tech economy.
- **Building improvements at Olympic College.** These construction projects will provide an urgently needed upgrade to the main campus building and more technologically advanced facilities for our students.



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These facilities in the west and south Puget Sound will present tremendous opportunities for young high school graduates in our area and returning students who are seeking a new career.

Additionally, we have worked hard to make it easier for families to afford college by:

- Providing more Promise Scholarships for low and middle-income students seeking to earn a college degree.
- And enacting **House Bill 2126**. This measure authorizes the state's Guaranteed Education Tuition Committee to establish a college savings fund for room and board, books and other expenses for college students. The program, operating in conjunction with the state's pre-paid tuition program, will help families start saving for college long before a student reaches college age.

## ◆ Economic Development:

To address the continuing disparity between the economic health of west and east Puget Sound, we passed several measures that will improve the economic climate in our area. These bills include:



- **House Bill 1361** (sponsored by Rep. Jackley), a measure to simplify the excise tax code for small businesses. This law will reduce regulations on small businesses, create an exemption for the purchase of ride-sharing passenger vehicles from retail and use taxes, and establish a reporting extension for businesses that receive Business & Occupation tax credits.
- **House Bill 1445**, a bill improving access to capital for disadvantaged entrepreneurs by extending low-cost start-up loans through the Prosperity Partnership Account.
- **House Bill 1418**, a measure to promote community revitalization by enabling cities

and small towns to reinvest more of their property tax revenue in local projects.

- **House Bill 1891**, a bill to promote the marketing of Washington agricultural products abroad.
- **House Bill 1163**, setting new penalties for littering and abandoning junk vehicles in urban areas.

## ◆ Public Health & Safety:

Despite major constraints on our state budget, we were careful to ensure that public health and safety were not compromised. Some of the key measures that passed include:

- Restoration of local government funding (cut by Initiative 695) used to hire law enforcement officers.
- Increased pay for long-term caregivers.
- **House Bill 1365**, co-sponsored by Rep. Jackley, a measure to protect children by notifying parents when baby products like car seats and strollers are recalled for being dangerous.
- **Senate Bill 5533**, a bill to inform parents when pesticides are sprayed near local schools.
- **House Bill 1280**, toughening penalties for hit-and-run drivers.



We also worked vigorously to curb the spread of methamphetamine, passing **Senate Bill 5017** to prohibit the sale of large quantities of meth components or “precursor” drugs. After finding a meth lab behind his small business in Bremerton, Rep. Jackley, who introduced the House version of this bill, became keenly aware of the impact of this devastating drug. In addition to the physical dangers of meth use, it also often leads users to horribly neglect their children and exposes all who come in contact with its chemicals to toxic waste.

### ◆ Salmon Recovery:

One of our foremost goals is to restore the flowing salmon runs of the Hood Canal. Our two-year capital budget advances this goal by including nearly \$63 million for salmon recovery efforts. These funds will be used to protect salmon spawning grounds and passageways throughout the west Puget Sound.



We also passed a measure to protect wild Pacific salmon from Atlantic salmon and other fin fish, **House Bill 1499**. The new law, sponsored by Rep. Jackley, grants the Department of Fish & Wildlife the authority to regulate Atlantic salmon farms in the Puget Sound. This important measure will help to preserve the quality of wild salmon native to the Pacific Northwest.

The governor also signed into law **House Bill 1394**, a measure to grant counties more flexibility in spending their road funds. The new law, co-

sponsored by Rep. Jackley, will allow counties to use their road funds for the removal of barriers to fish passage caused by county roads. Small investments such as carefully constructing roads, bridges and sewers or setting up fish screens will make our communities a better place for salmon.

### ◆ Judicial Reform:

In recent years, criminal and civil courts have experienced tremendous increases in caseloads. Due to these overburdened courtrooms, litigants have been forced to wait years for resolution of their cases. Hopefully, most of us haven't had to experience this, but for those that do end up in court this can mean that a landlord-tenant dispute or a family law case will drag on interminably.

To address this problem, Rep. Lantz, co-chair of the House Judiciary Committee, pushed a series of measures to ease the overburdened courts across the state. Rep. Lantz prime-sponsored the House version of **Senate Bill 5394** which allows jurisdictions to borrow judges from nearby jurisdictions when a backlog of cases occurs. Before this change occurs, voters will need to amend the Washington state Constitution in the November election. A vote to amend the Constitution will clear the way for this urgent reform to take place.



Finally, three other reform measures advanced by Rep. Lantz were signed into law:

- A measure to increase juror pay to \$25 per day.
- **House Bill 1643**- limits the personal liability of volunteers at nonprofit organizations or governmental agencies.
- **House Bill 1545**- amends provisions regarding the operation of non-profit corporations, simplifying the governing procedures of these organizations.



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## ◆ Still To Come:

We did not complete all of our work this session. Several issues that we hope to address next year include:

- **A publicly accountable second Tacoma Narrows Bridge-** The momentum is moving in our direction to pass a plan that includes public financing and public oversight. We will continue to advocate for this important issue.
- **A long-term transportation plan-** We remain committed to developing a statewide transportation plan that gives local communities decision-making authority about transportation improvements and taxing options, in addition to offering commuters real transportation choices including ferries, buses, carpools, and telecommuting options.
- **An anti-bullying bill-** We are finally recognizing the awful impact that bullying has on young people. What was deemed a rite of passage only a short time ago is now being acknowledged for what it truly is- harmful behavior that damages those involved throughout their lives. This session we attempted to pass a measure that would help school districts statewide develop a coherent response to bullying. The bill would direct the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to draft a model policy for school districts to draw from while granting local school districts the final say in developing their own policies.
- **Grandparents' rights-** Additionally, we will work to ensure that grandparents and those who have played important roles in the lives



of children have the opportunity to maintain contact with these children. This measure, also known as third-party visitation, stems from a Supreme Court ruling that limited opportunities for grandparents to have contact with their grandchildren.

- **Stage two of judicial reform-** Next we plan to monitor the state's civil forfeiture laws. Currently, some individuals charged with crimes are at risk of having their possessions confiscated if the items are related to the suspected criminal activity. In some cases, individuals have lost possessions before even being convicted of a crime. We have begun to study this practice and are considering legislation to ensure that property unrelated to criminal activity is not seized.
- **Funding for meth lab clean-up-** Meth labs are a terrible hazard to people and the environment. Next session we'll be working hard to ensure that police have all the tools necessary to decontaminate these dangerous sites.



## ◆ Protecting Guide Dogs & Service Animals:

Each weekday morning, Hy Cohen and his guide dog, Layla, walked to a bus stop near his house. Then, a new dog moved into the neighborhood and started terrorizing Layla during these morning walks. Layla, trained to be passive toward other dogs, was rendered unable to perform her guide dog duties, often leading Cohen away from his destination.

Cohen contacted local police, but found that little could be done to prevent humans or other dogs from interfering with guide dogs and service animals. Further, he was left to consider retraining Layla to help her overcome her fear of large dogs, an incredibly expensive process, or avoid other dogs whenever possible. In response, Cohen proposed legislation that would strengthen penalties against those who harm or intentionally interfere with these animals.

Rep. Lantz co-sponsored the House version of the legislation that became "Layla's Law" this spring. On a good note, Layla was successfully re-trained and is happily serving as a guide dog again.



*Pictured with Rep. Lantz are a group of west Puget Sound supporters of Layla's Law. From left to right are Betsy Peacock and her dog, Riata; Jeanne Hampl; Barry Sheridan and Brody; Rep. Lantz; Don Alfera and Brandy; in front is Jackie Pearce-Droge and Cheyenne.*

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26th District  
News

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PO BOX 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper